

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-12

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R 231310Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7992

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 2376

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CY XF US

SUBJECT: PRESS PLAY RE PHASEDOWN OF US RADIO STATIONS

REF: NICOSIA 2371

SUMMARY: PRESS COVERAGE OF PIO BACKGROUNDER RE RADIO STATIONS GENERALLY FACTUAL AND GOOD FROM OUR STANDPOINT, BUT GOVT OF CYPRUS MAY HAVE TROUBLE OVER PIO'S REFERENCE TO \$1 MILLION ANNUAL RENTAL. NOV 22 PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OPENED ON LYSSARIDES MOTION TO CLOSE OUT ALL THREE STATIONS, TO CONTINUE NEXT WEEK. EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPT'S ADVICE RE EVENTUALITY GOVT MAY DECIDE PUBLISH TEXT 1968 AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. PIO NOV 21 ON BACKGROUND BASIS INFORMED LOCAL PRESS THAT, DUE TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS, PERSONNEL AT THREE RPT THREE RADIO STATIONS WOULD BE REDUCED AND, POSSIBLY, TWO STATIONS YEROLAKKOS, MIA MILIA, CLOSED DOWN IN NEAR FUTURE. SPOKESMAN STRESSED THAT KARAVAS WOULD CONTINUE OPERATIONS, THAT TIMING AND DETAILS OF PHASEDOWN NOT YET DECIDED, AND THAT USG WILL ENDEAVOR FIND OTHER JOBS AND PROVIDE COMPENSATION PENSION FOR AFFECTED LOCAL EMPLOYEES. PAPERS ALSO REPORT THAT, IN INFORMING CYPRUS GOVT OF USG DECISION, AMERICAN EMBASSY MADE NO REFERENCE TO \$1 MILLION (SIC) ANNUAL PAYMENTS TO GOVT FOR FACILITIES IN CONNECTINON RADIO STATIONS.

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2. SO FAR MOST PRESS PLAY HAS BEEN FACTUAL, WITH MAIN LOCAL

CONCERN FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PHASEOUT AND POSSIBLE CLOSEDOWN. PREDICTABLY, LYSSARIDES "TA NEA" CLAIMED VICTORY FOR EDEK (IN VIEW MOTION IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES) WHILE COMMUNIST "HARAVGHI" CALLED FOR ELIMINATION ALL THREE "SPY STATIONS". GRIVASITE "ETHNIKI" IS BLASTING GOVT FOR FAILURE ACCOUNT FOR RENTAL PAYMENTS, CALLING ON HOUSE TO EXAMINE "SCANDAL" DURING UPCOMING BUDGET DEBATES. POSSIBLE BELLWETHER OF GOVT LINE IS NOV 23 EDITORIAL IN UNOFFICIAL MOUTHPIECE "PHILELEFTHEROS" WELCOMING USG DECISION CLOSE TWO STATIONS AS GOOD, AND HELPFUL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL HELP CYPRUS AVOID "MISUNDERSTANDINGS" IN NEIGHBORING ARAB WORLD. TURK CYPRIOT PRESS HAS PLAYED STORY STRAIGHT, WITHOUT COMMENTARY.

3. LATE AFTERNOON NOV 22 PARLIAMENT BEGAN DEBATE ON LYSSARIDES MOTION CALLING FOR REMOVAL ALL THREE STATIONS. ONLY SPEAKER WAS LYSSARIDES WHO MADE STANDARD ARGUMENTS AGAINST USG'S SINISTER SPYING ON ARABS, CYPRUS GOVT, AND LOCAL GREEK EMBASSY. INTERESTINGLY, AKEL DEPUTY MOTIONED TO DEFER DEBATE UNTIL NEXT SESSION; DUE TO LATENESS OF HOUR AND PROBABLE LACK OF PREPARATION ALL PARTIES, MOTION WAS ACCEPTED. OVER NEXT FEW DAYS GOVT WILL NO DOUBT CONFER WITH FRIENDLY PARTY LEADERS ON STRATEGY FOR HANDLING LYSSARIDES MOTION. ON BASIS OUR INITIAL SOUNDINGS, THERE SEEMS GENERAL INCLINATION NOT HAVE EXTENSIVE DEBATE ON FLOOR; POSSIBLY, HOUSE WILL DECIDE NOT TO PUT LYSSARIDES MOTION TO VOTE.

4. WITH EXCEPTION WIRE SERVICE QUERIES REPORTED REFTTEL, LOCAL PRESS HAS NOT PURSUED SUBJECT WITH US PAST FEW DAYS. WE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN WHY PIO GRATUITOUSLY REFERRED TO ANNUAL RENTAL. THIS ISSUE COULD WELL TROUBLE GOVT IN VIEW PENDING BUDGET DEBATES AND WE EXPECT OPPOSITION PRESS WILL CONTINUE FOCUS ON IT. IF ASKED, WE WILL REFER INQUIRIES "RE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS" TO GOVT OF CYPRUS. WE ASSUME GOVT WILL SIMPLY CLAM UP RE PIO SLIP. HOWEVER, IT POSSIBLE THAT GOVT MAY DECIDE PUBLISH 1968 AGREEMENT IN EFFORT QUASH DISTORTED RUMORS. OUR READING OF NEGOTIATING HISTORY DOES NOT SHOW ANY BASIC USG OBJECTION TO RELEASE OF TEXT, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENTS VIEW, AND WHETHER PUBLICATION MIGHT CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR USG RELAY OPERATIONS ELSEWHERE.

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Message Attributes

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